**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE**

Applicant: de Nora et al.

Application No.: continuation of 09/982,552

Filed: concomitant Examiner: tbd

For: THE START-UP OF ALUMINIUM ELECTROWINNING CELLS

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

In the CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 51-98 (as renumbered by the Examiner in 09/982,552).

Please add the following new claims:

99. An aluminium electrowinning cathode having a cathode surface on which, in use, aluminium is produced and forms a layer or pool thereon, and which is covered with one or more start-up layers to protect temporarily the cathode surface during start-up in an aluminium electrowinning cell against chemical attack by reaction with gases and/or fluids such as melting electrolyte during preheating in the cell, said start-up layer(s) comprising at least one solid layer made of a metallization selected from metallizations of aluminium, nickel, iron, titanium, cobalt, chromium, vanadium, zirconium, hafnium, niobium, tantalum, molybdenum, cerium and copper, and their intermetallic compounds comprising aluminium, and their alloys, which metallization is in intimate matching contact with the cathode surface before preheating in the cell and so applied as to remain in intimate matching contact with the cathode surface during preheating in the cell.

100. The cathode of claim 99, which is made of at least one of: carbonaceous material; electrically conductive carbon-free material; electrically non-conductive carbon-free material; and combinations thereof, and is covered with said one or more start-up layers.